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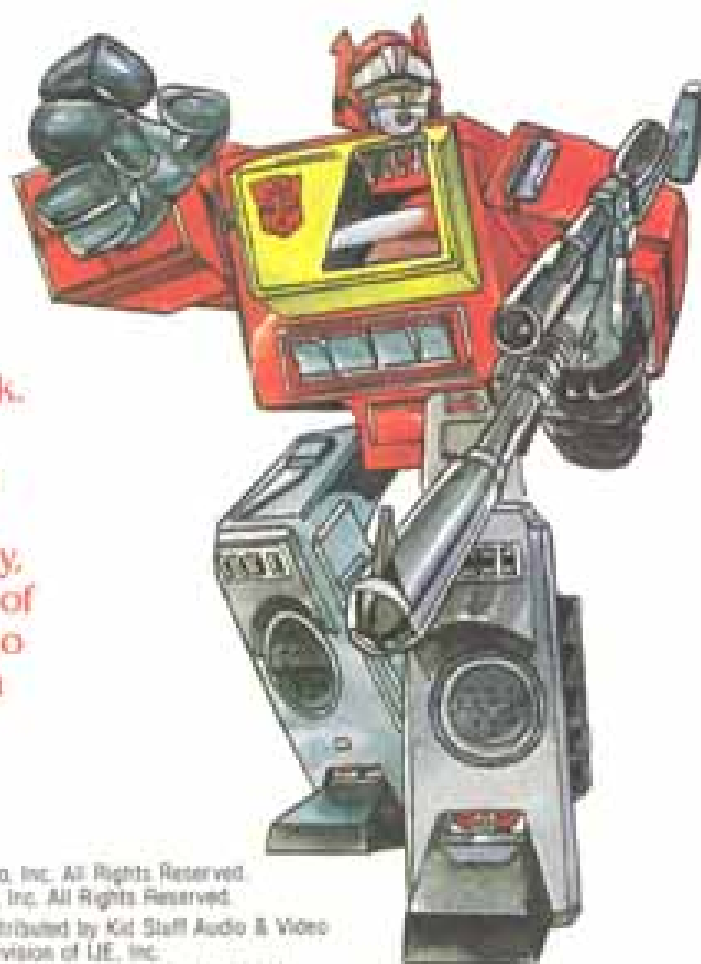
MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE!

# FORMERS<sup>®</sup>

## SLAVES OF THE INSECTICONS

Written by John Braden  
Illustrated by  
Pablo and Judith Marcos

Hi, everybody. This is your  
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sound... it means it's time to  
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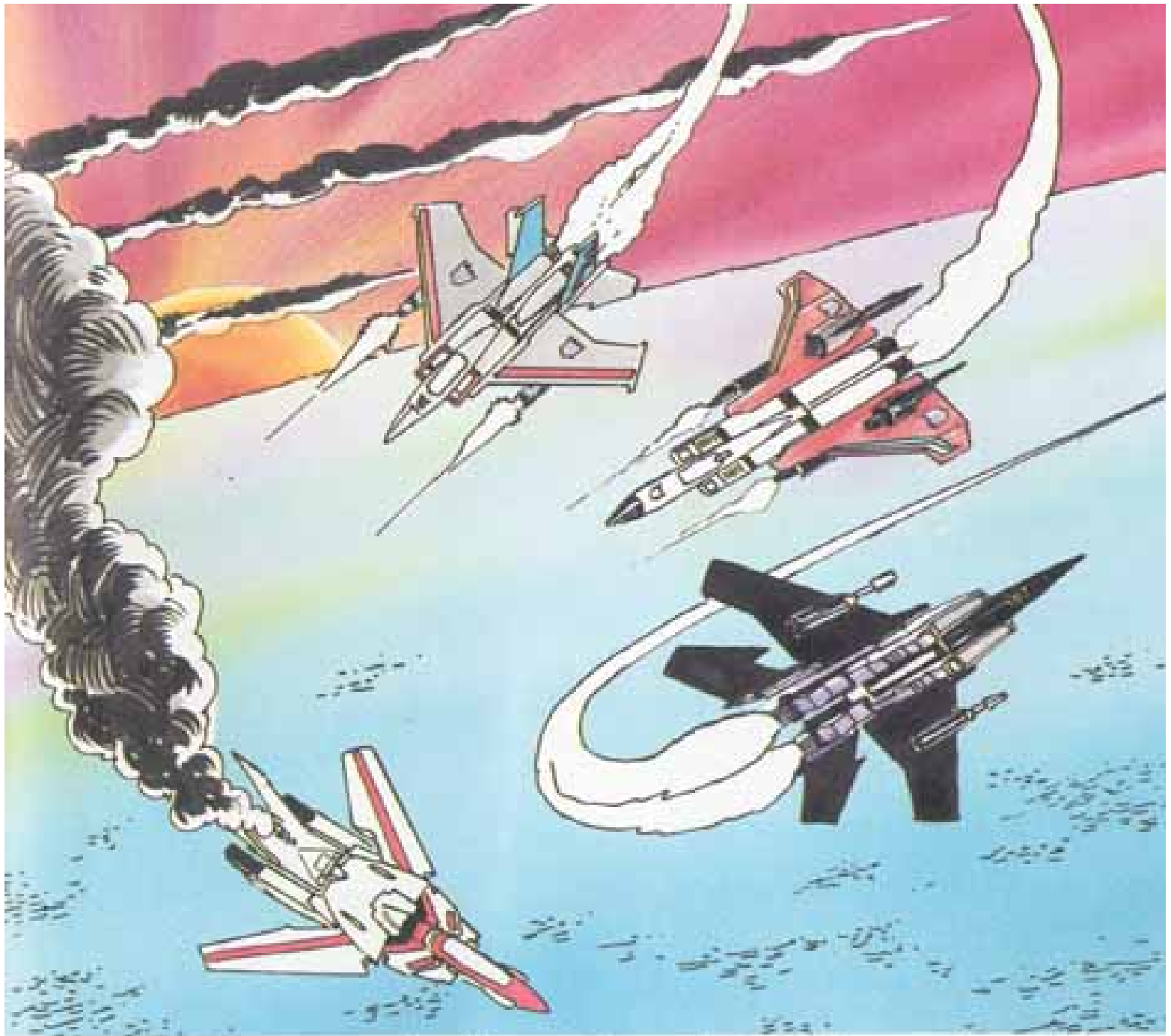


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The Autobot superjet flight roared into the western Pacific sky as the huge, red fireball that was the sun began slipping quickly below the horizon. The superjets had refueled from their supply base on the island of Guam and were now ready to continue patrolling. This continuous patrolling was necessary to prevent the evil Decepticons from carrying out their deadly aims: the destruction of the Autobots, the occupation of Earth, and the conquest of the Universe!

Skyfire, the Autobot flight leader, ordered the other superjets to test-fire their weapons. Once that was done, things settled into a peaceful routine patrol.





However, in the western sky, Skywarp, the sneaky Decepticon warrior, had plans to interrupt that peaceful patrol. He and two other Decepticon warriors came hurtling out of the setting sun in a surprise attack, blasting the Autobots with null-rays and machine-gun fire. Then, before the Autobots could react, they broke off the action and streaked away to the east.

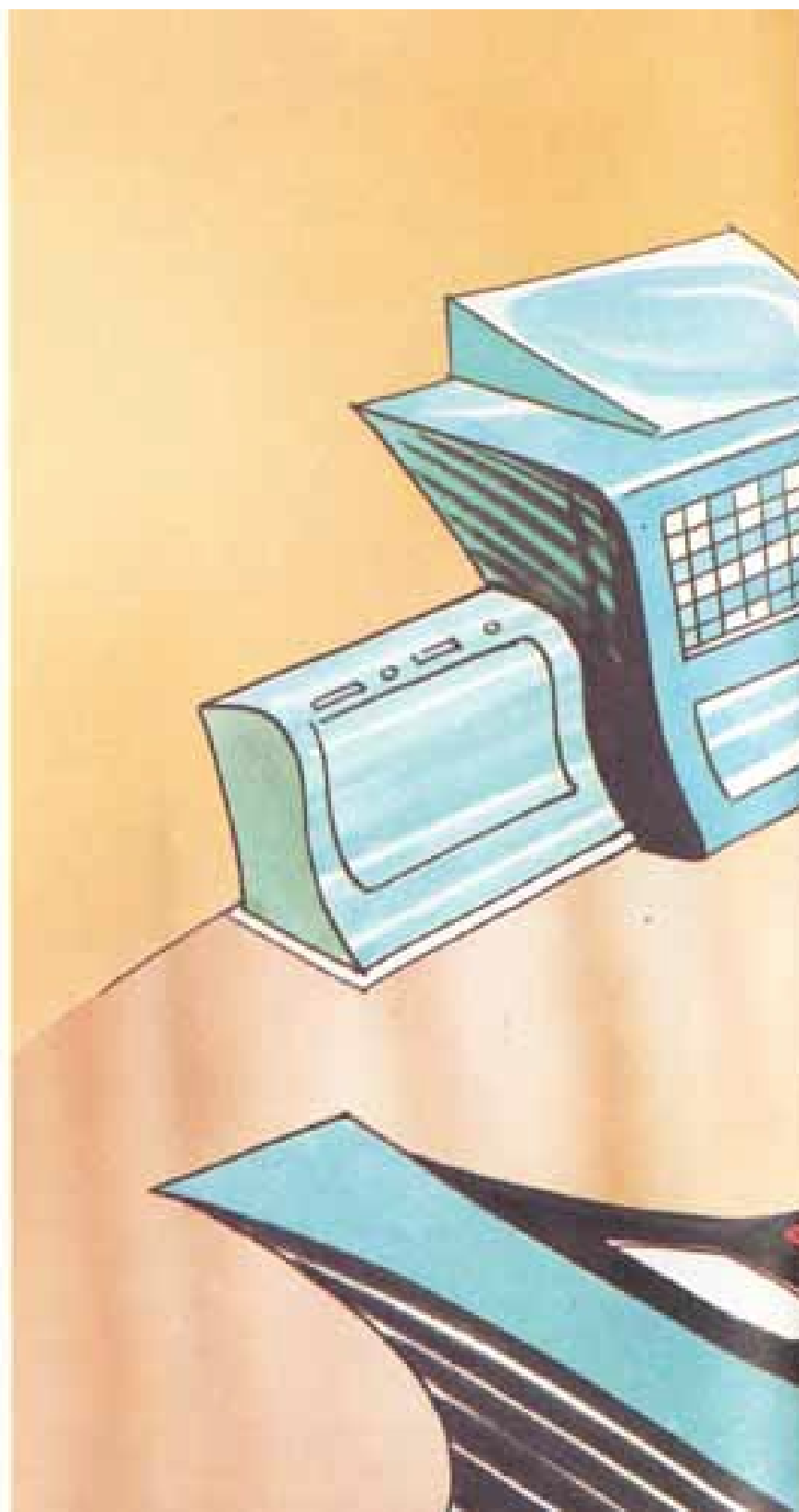
Skyfire immediately turned east and gave chase.

In the dimness of the Autobot command center, there was puzzled reaction to the strange Decepticon behavior. The glowing, green monitor screens that had been following the battle told Optimus Prime, the noble and fearless Autobot leader, *what* was happening, but not *why* it was happening.

Prowl, Optimus Prime's right-hand robot, was just as confused as he pointed out, "The Decepticons have fired their engines' after-burners. Shall I order Skyfire to do the same and continue the chase?"

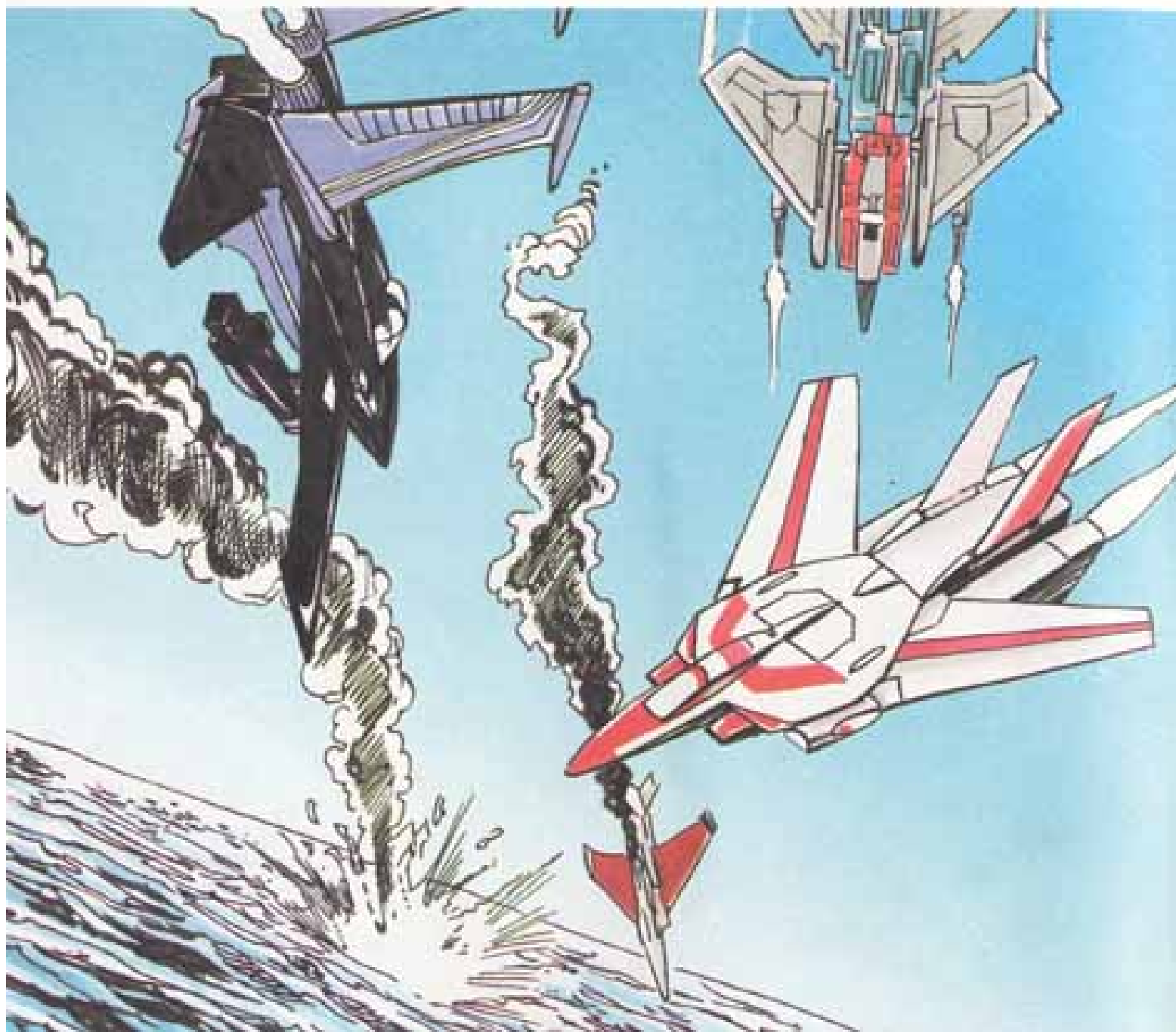
Optimus Prime thought for a moment, then replied, "No, Prowl. Let them go. Fuel is too precious for us to burn it up on a useless chase. We need to figure out what the Decepticons are up to first, or we might be drawn into a trap of some sort."

"Well, there's one thing we know for certain," Prowl continued. "This pattern of attacking and then running is becoming a common occurrence in countries bordering on the Pacific Ocean. What could be the Decepticons' reasoning?"



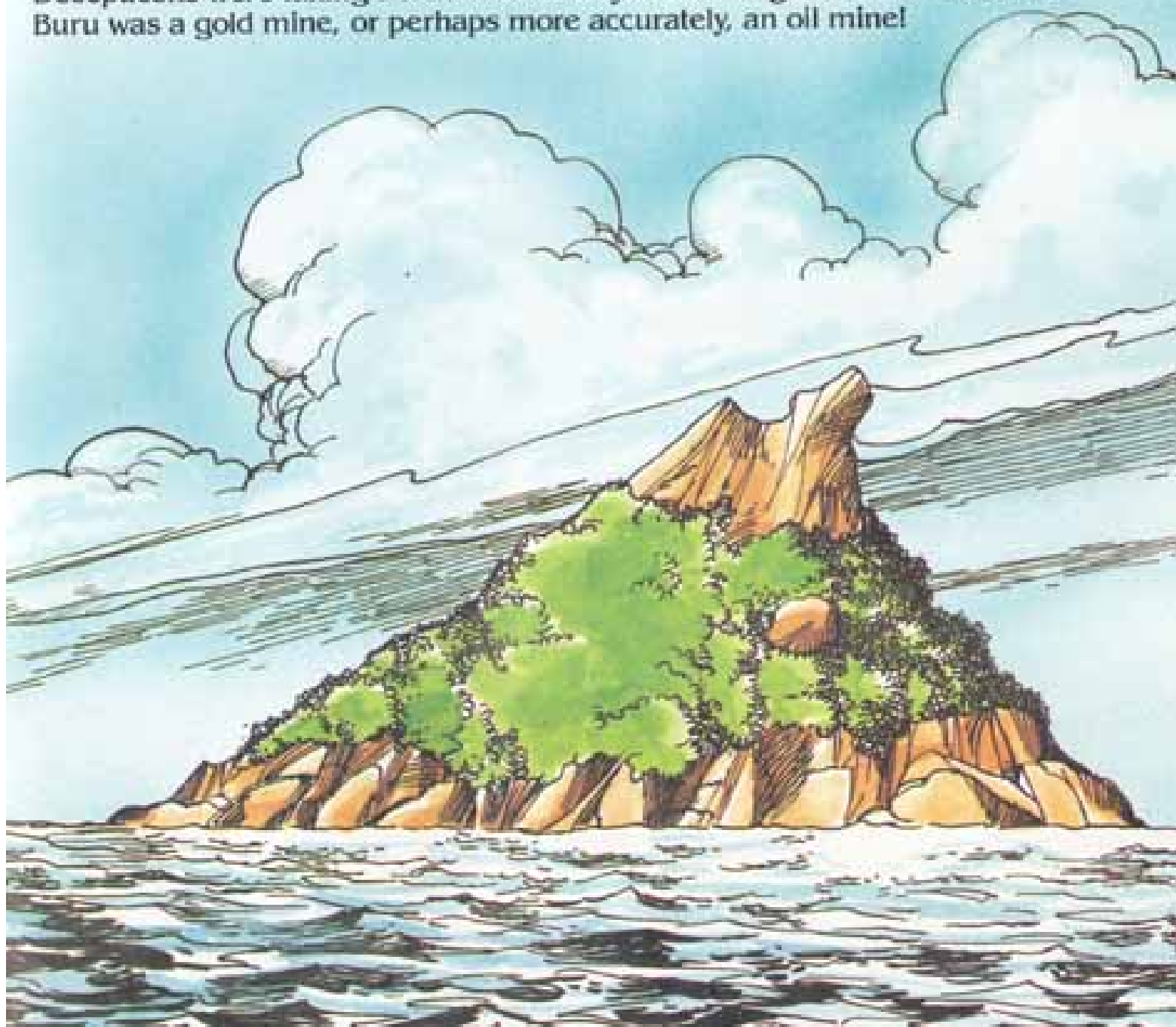


The following day, the Decepticons once again struck an Autobot patrol in their usual confusing fashion, this time southeast of the Pacific Island of Sumatra. Led by the warrior Starscream, the Decepticons blew two Autobot superjets out of the sky, then turned tail and disappeared into the western foothills of the Himalaya Mountains. The Autobots took off in hot pursuit.



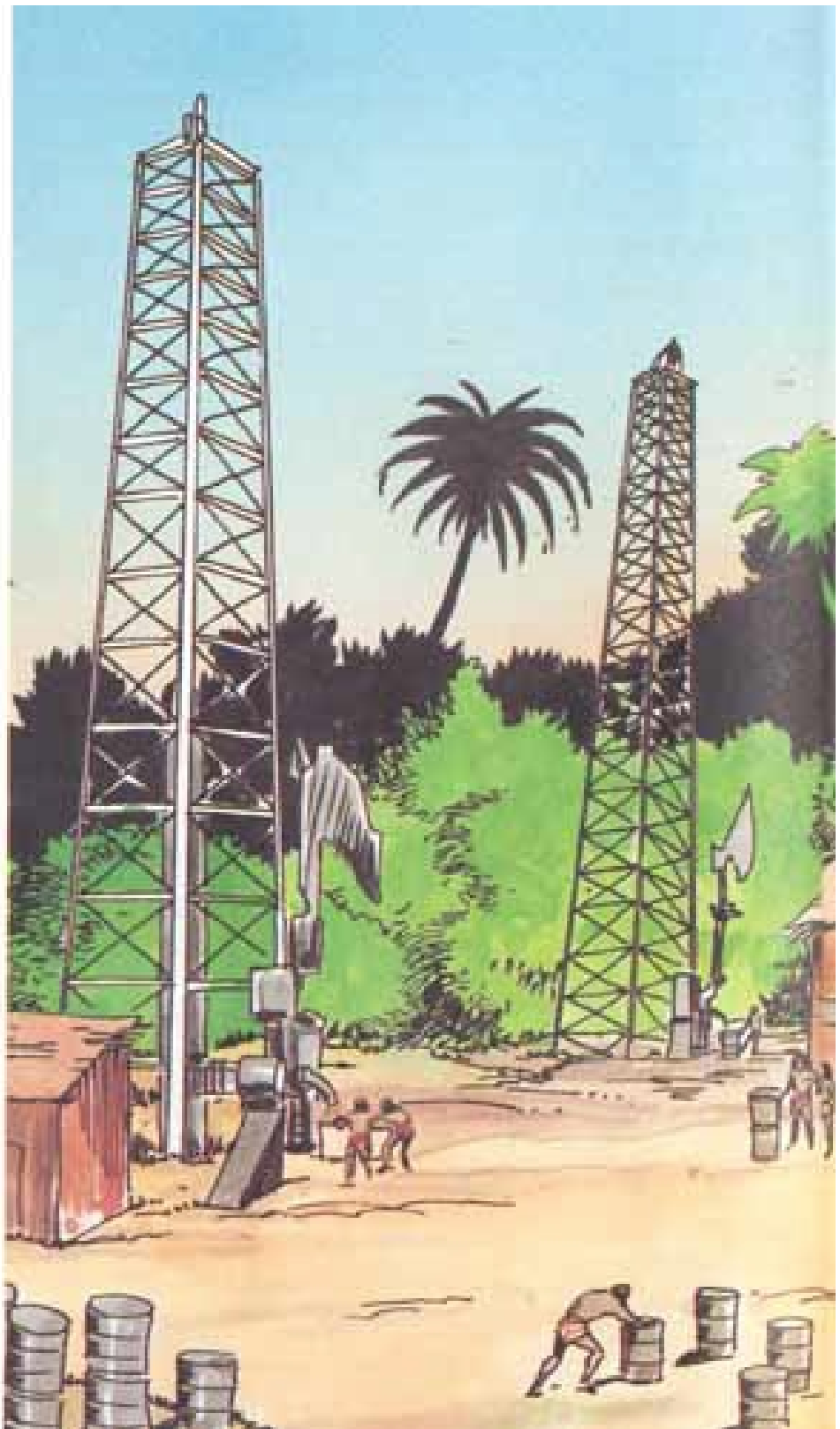


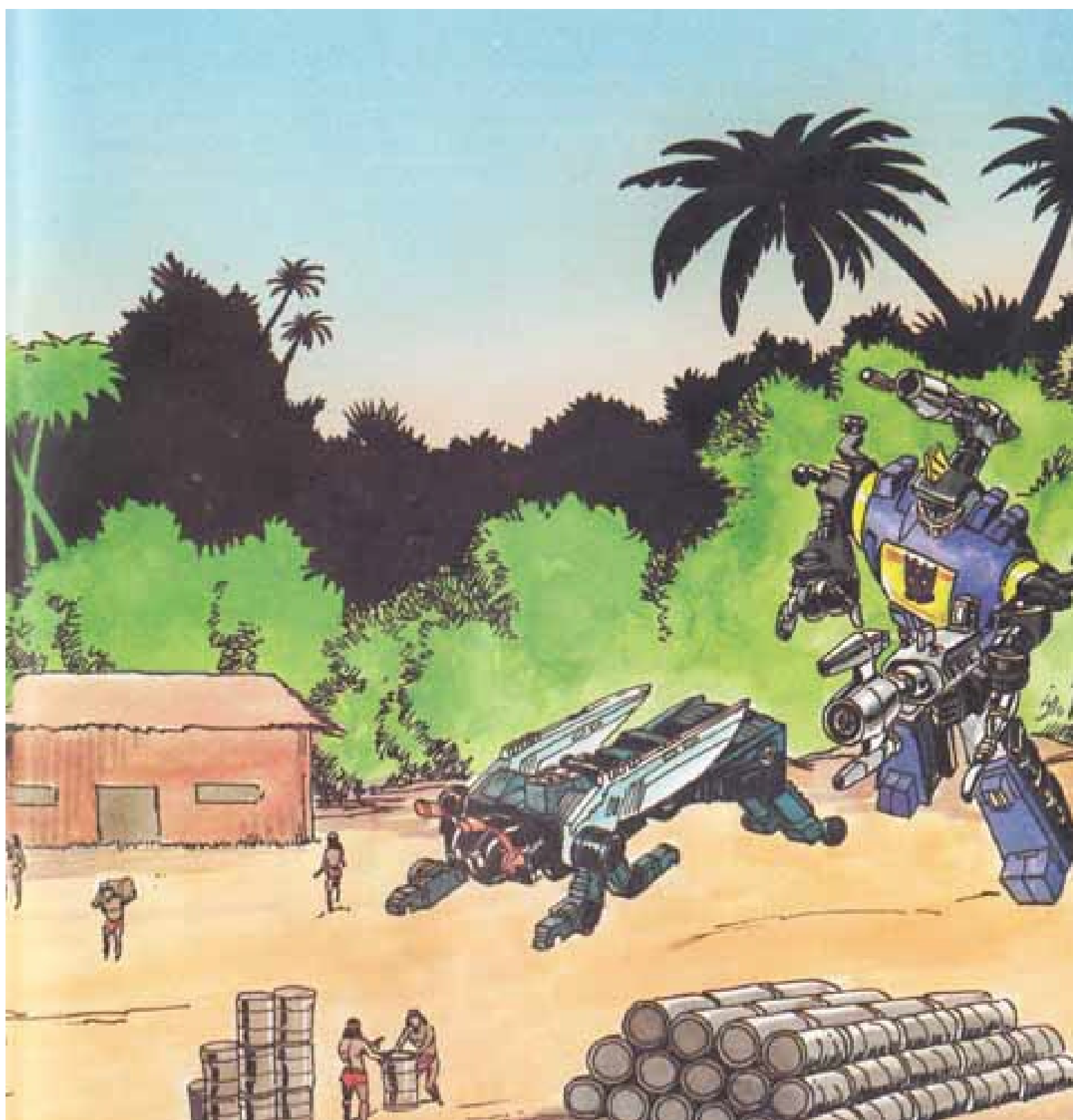
Although these strange actions held no reason for the Autobots, they had a clear purpose for the Decepticons—to keep prying Autobot eyes away from the island of Buru. Anyone flying quickly over Buru would see nothing more than a tropical, rain-forest covered dot in the southwestern Pacific Ocean. Anyone could fly over it a hundred times and never give it a second glance. But the Decepticons were taking no chances of anyone coming there even once, for Buru was a gold mine, or perhaps more accurately, an oil mine!



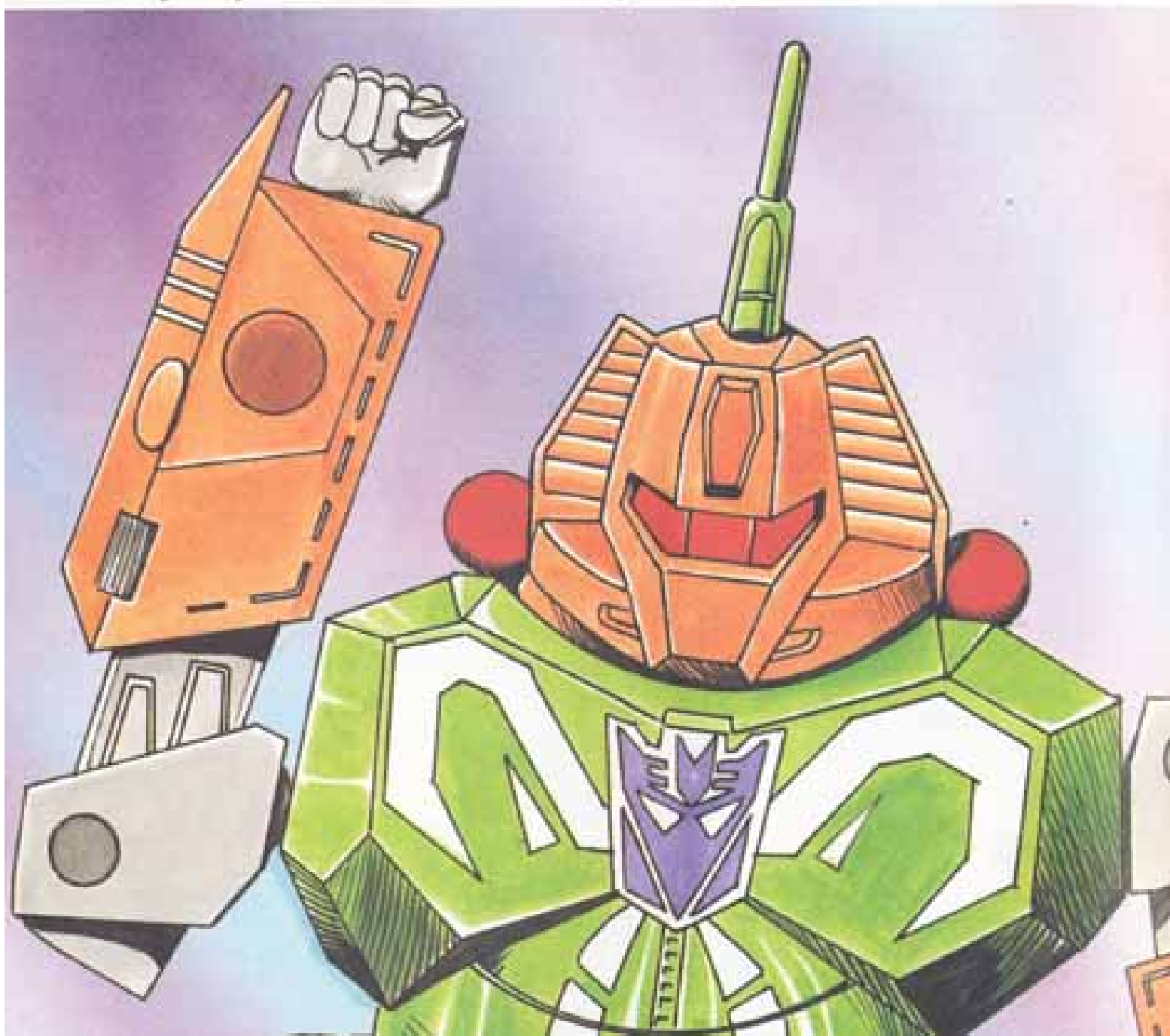
For the Decepticons, the accidental discovery of an oil supply on Buru was a great boost to their evil plans, and the fact that the oil was especially pure and plentiful thrilled the Decepticons beyond their wildest imagination. Because that fuel meant life to the Decepticons, because it meant more wars and more conquests, the Decepticons had eagerly hacked out a mining camp in the steaming green jungle that covered the island. It had been a dangerous and difficult job—one that had been assigned to those Decepticons most able to stand the jungle's dirt and smells. . . . It had been assigned to the Insecticons!

It was the Insecticons who had defeated the local natives and turned them into slaves. It was the Insecticons who had set up the oil mining operation on Buru. As the mines pumped oil to the surface, they were pumping new life into the Decepticon plans to conquer the Universe!



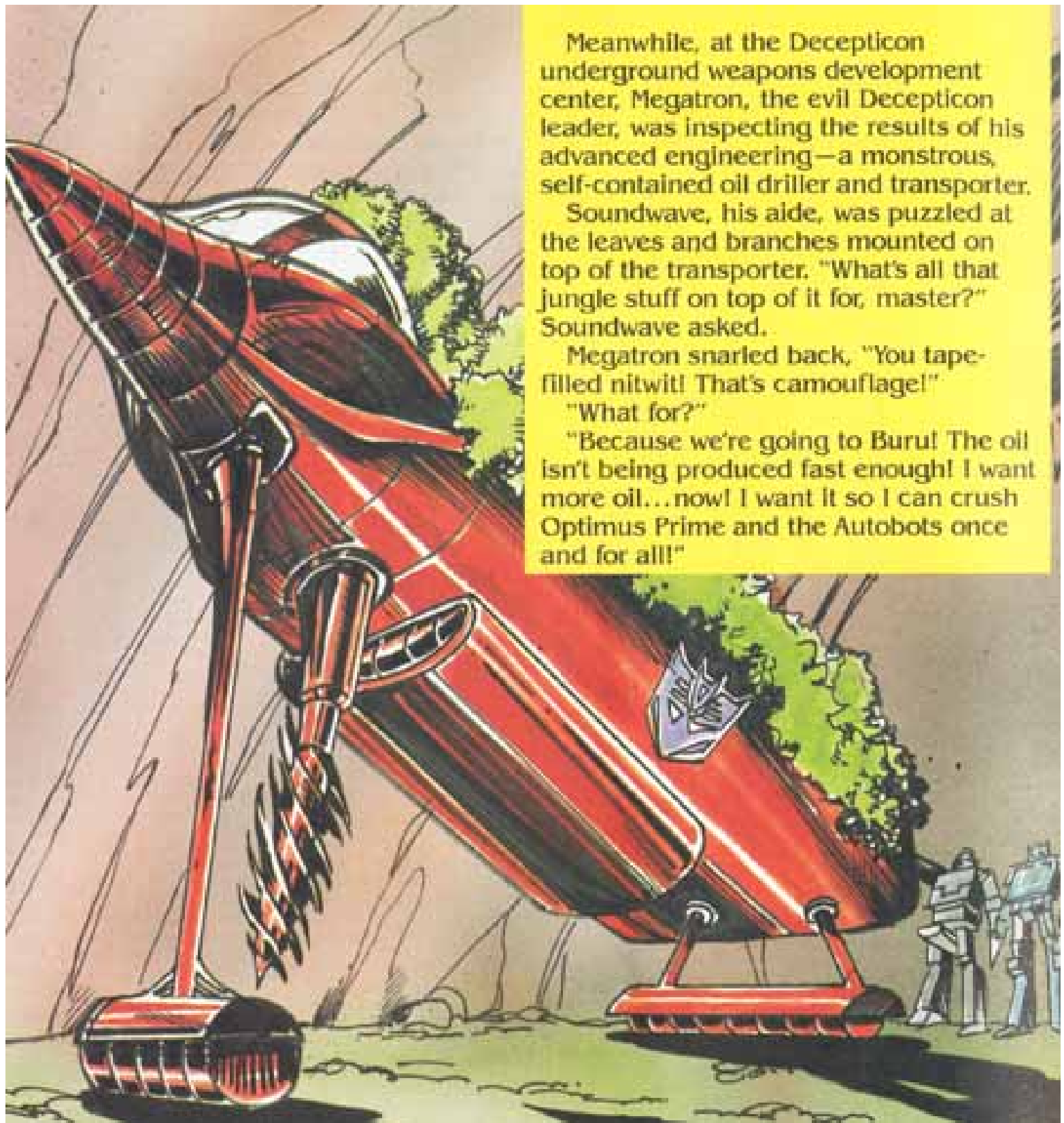


Like any mining town in such a faraway location, the one on Buru was a rough and dangerous place. However, activity flowed peacefully and without interruption, because the Insecticon guards, led by Venom, were always on patrol to make certain of it. All the work was carried out by the Island natives and any stray Autobots that had been captured by the Decepticons.



On the surface, the workers appeared to be normal and content as they went about their work. However, on closer inspection, it was clear that they had been turned into zombie-like creatures. They carried out orders without question, because their willpower and resistance had been crushed—paralyzed by the poisonous fluid injected into them by Insecticon stingers. It was a fluid so powerful that it turned both humans and Autobots into powerless slaves.





Meanwhile, at the Decepticon underground weapons development center, Megatron, the evil Decepticon leader, was inspecting the results of his advanced engineering—a monstrous, self-contained oil driller and transporter.

Soundwave, his aide, was puzzled at the leaves and branches mounted on top of the transporter. "What's all that jungle stuff on top of it for, master?" Soundwave asked.

Megatron snarled back, "You tape-filled nitwit! That's camouflage!"

"What for?"

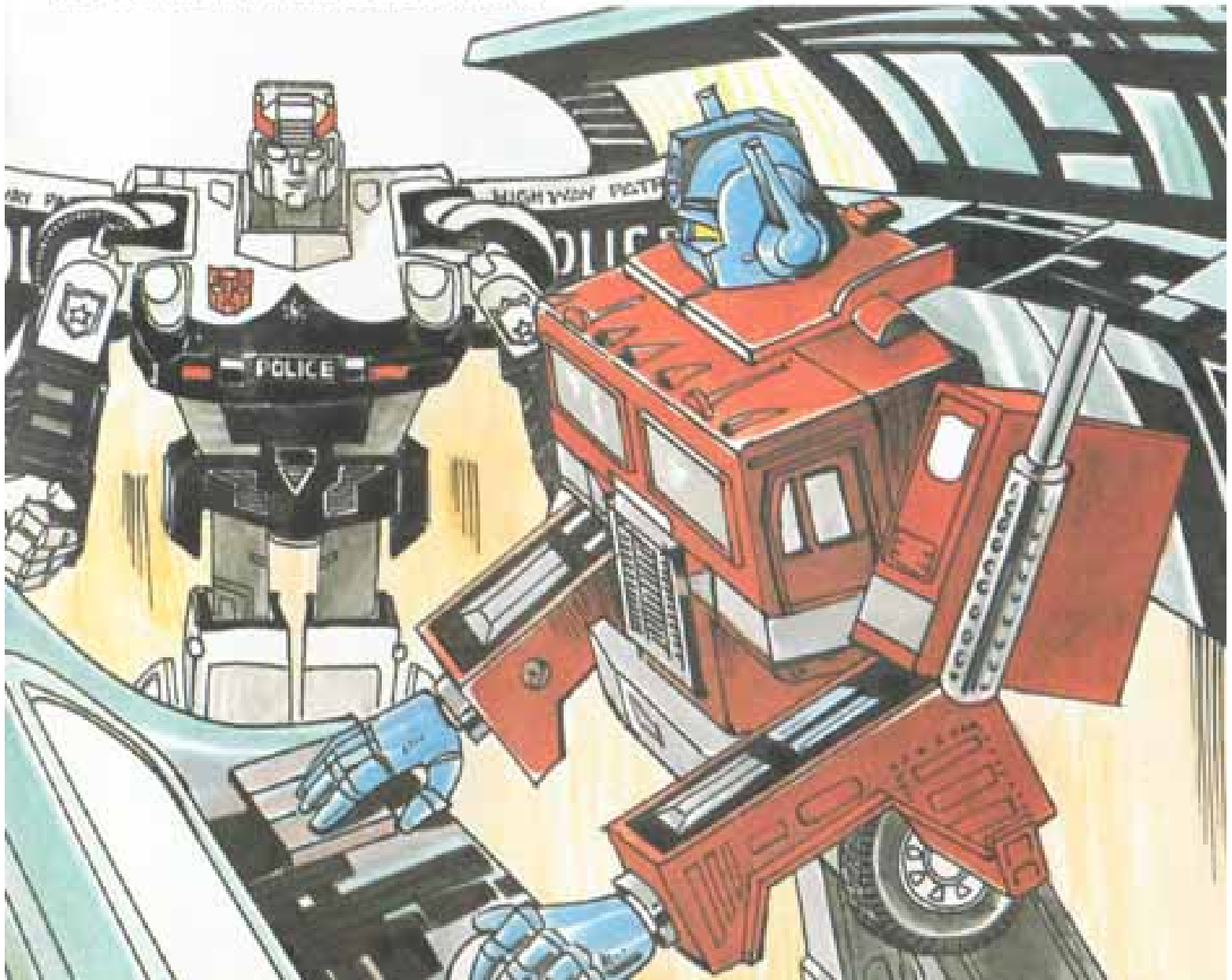
"Because we're going to Buru! The oil isn't being produced fast enough! I want more oil...now! I want it so I can crush Optimus Prime and the Autobots once and for all!"



While Megatron was planning his mission to Buru, Optimus Prime was waiting at the Autobot base for word from his scout, Bumblebee. The speedy scout had been out on a long-range patrol in the southwestern Pacific. He was now days overdue back at base.

Prowl had been monitoring the radio for days, with no word. Now, as he removed his headset, he shook his head at Optimus Prime and reported, "Still nothing, chief."

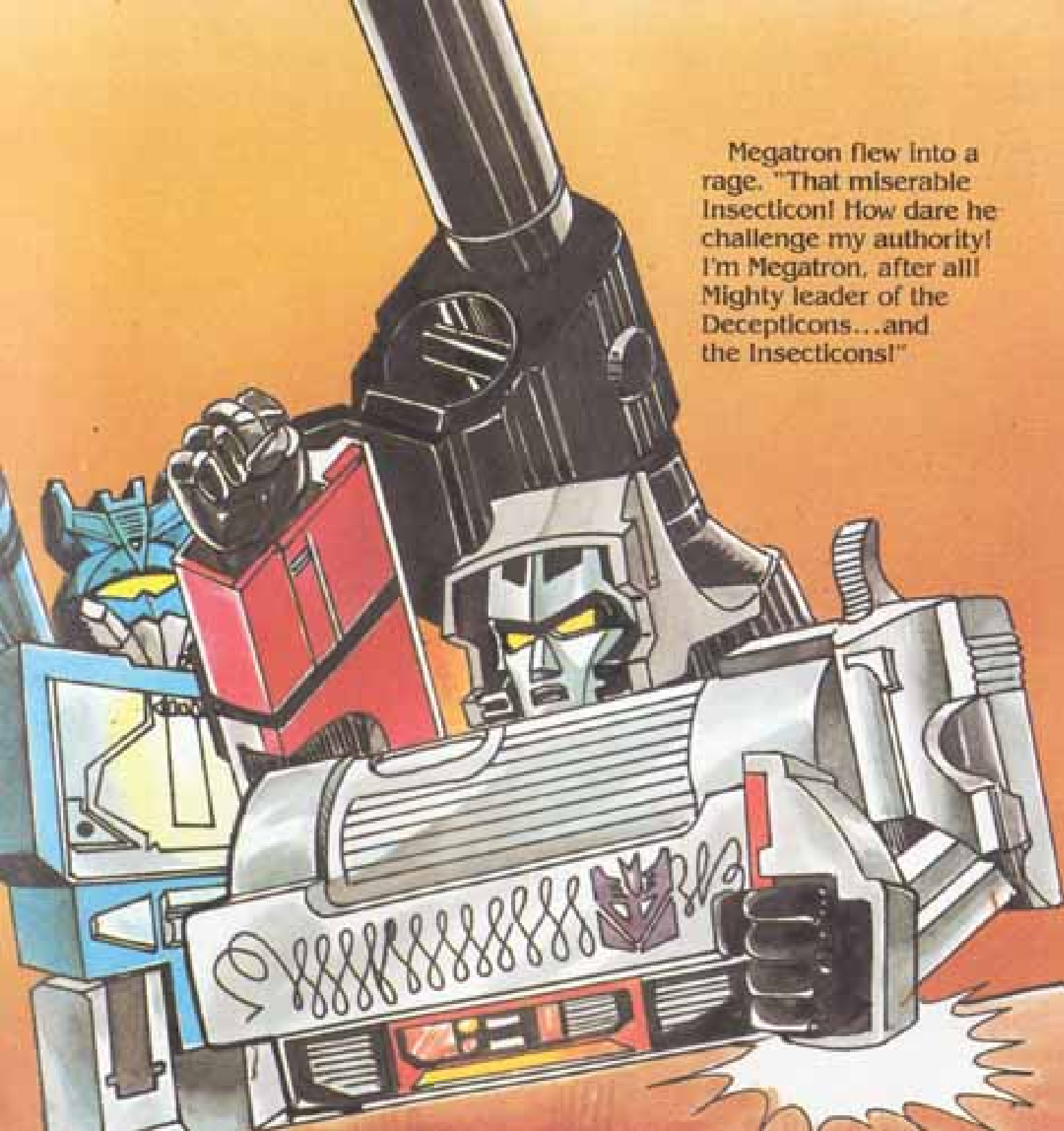
And there would be no word either. For Bumblebee had been captured and was now a slave of the Insecticons!



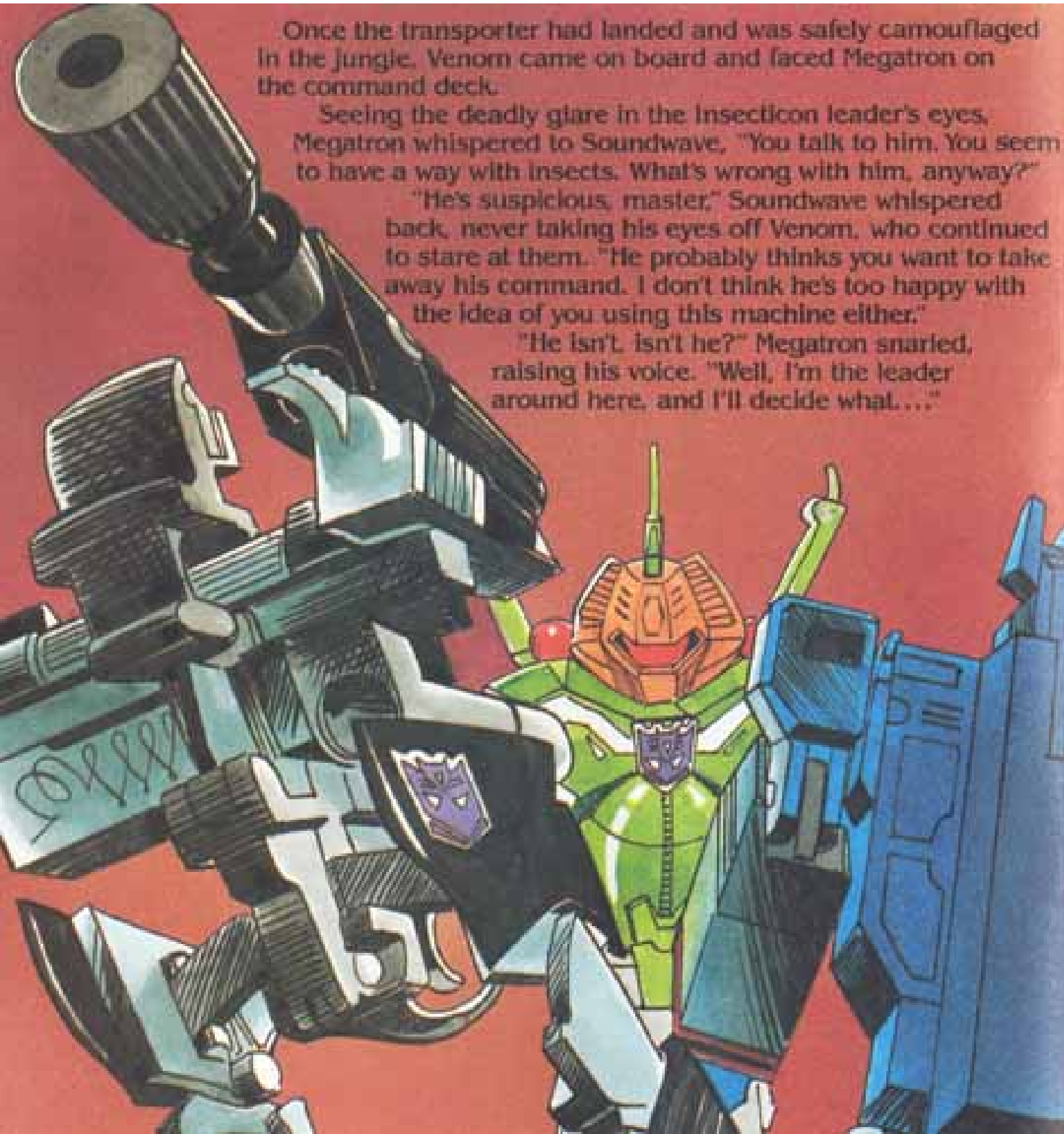
As the huge Decepticon oil driller and transporter circled over Buru, Soundwave received an urgent message from the island. Jumping up quickly, he announced to Megatron, "Venom has refused to pump the oil any faster! He says it's impossible!"





A close-up illustration of Megatron's face and arm. He has a stern, angry expression with yellow eyes. His arm is raised, holding a large, coiled metal spring. The background is a solid orange color.

Megatron flew into a rage. "That miserable Insecticon! How dare he challenge my authority! I'm Megatron, after all! Mighty leader of the Decepticons...and the Insecticons!"



Once the transporter had landed and was safely camouflaged in the jungle, Venom came on board and faced Megatron on the command deck.

Seeing the deadly glare in the Insecticon leader's eyes, Megatron whispered to Soundwave, "You talk to him. You seem to have a way with insects. What's wrong with him, anyway?"

"He's suspicious, master," Soundwave whispered back, never taking his eyes off Venom, who continued to stare at them. "He probably thinks you want to take away his command. I don't think he's too happy with the idea of you using this machine either."

"He isn't, isn't he?" Megatron snarled, raising his voice. "Well, I'm the leader around here, and I'll decide what..."

Megatron was suddenly interrupted by the ringing of the emergency alarm, indicating an urgent message coming in.

Soundwave switched on the monitor, then shouted, "Look, master! It's Optimus Prime and Prowl! They're overhead, approaching the island! Should we blast them out of the sky?"

"No," Megatron answered with an evil grin. "Let them come on in.... Venom can put *them* to work also. Ha! Ha! Ha!"



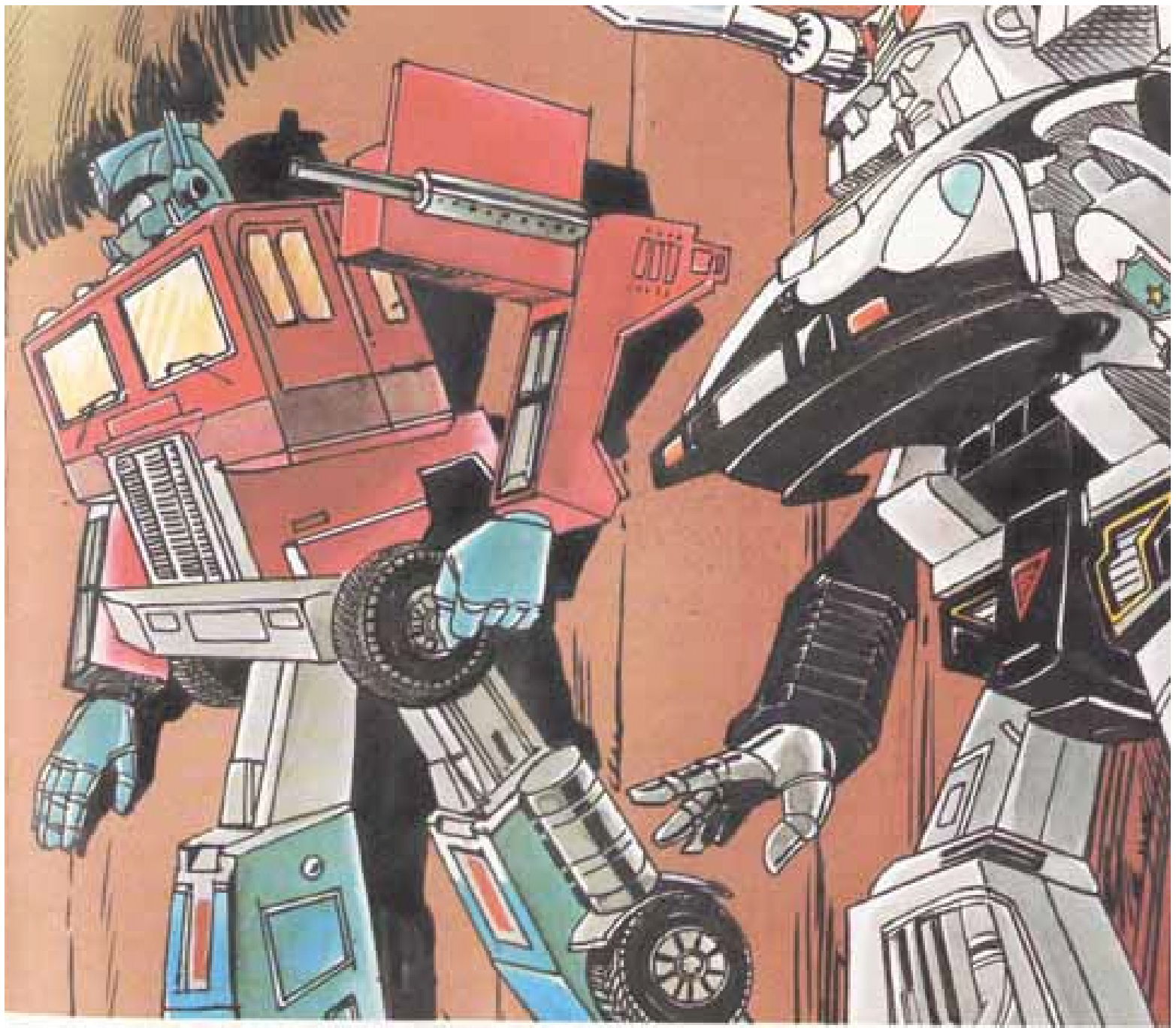
The Buru mining camp appeared normal to Optimus Prime and Prowl as they landed in a jungle clearing. There were no Insecticons...no Decepticon machinery...no Autobot slaves...only native workers busily going about their work. It looked no different than other oil mining camps Optimus Prime had seen around the Earth.



The two brave Autobots entered the camp cautiously. All was not right, of course, and Prowl's sixth sense told him so before either he or Optimus Prime really saw it.

"This place smells of Decepticon evil to me, chief. I feel it in my rivets so strongly, I'd almost be willing to bet Megatron himself isn't too far off."

"You have an uncanny sense, Prowl, but I..." Optimus Prime stopped, then



pointing to one of the workers, he whispered to Prowl, "Say, did you see the eyes on that man?...And that one too?"

"It's the work of the Insecticons!" Prowl hollered. "It's the fluid from their deadly stingers. These people are all slaves! And look! Bumblebee is too!"

With that, the Insecticon warriors broke cover, using their electric-blasters and cannons to launch an attack against the two Autobots.

In the control room on the oil transporter, Megatron roared with amusement as he watched Optimus Prime and Prowl trying to beat back the Insecticon attack. "Ha! Ha! Ha! Not only does Optimus Prime have to battle the Insecticons, but he'll also have to deal with Venom's anger over anyone meddling in his mining operations!"

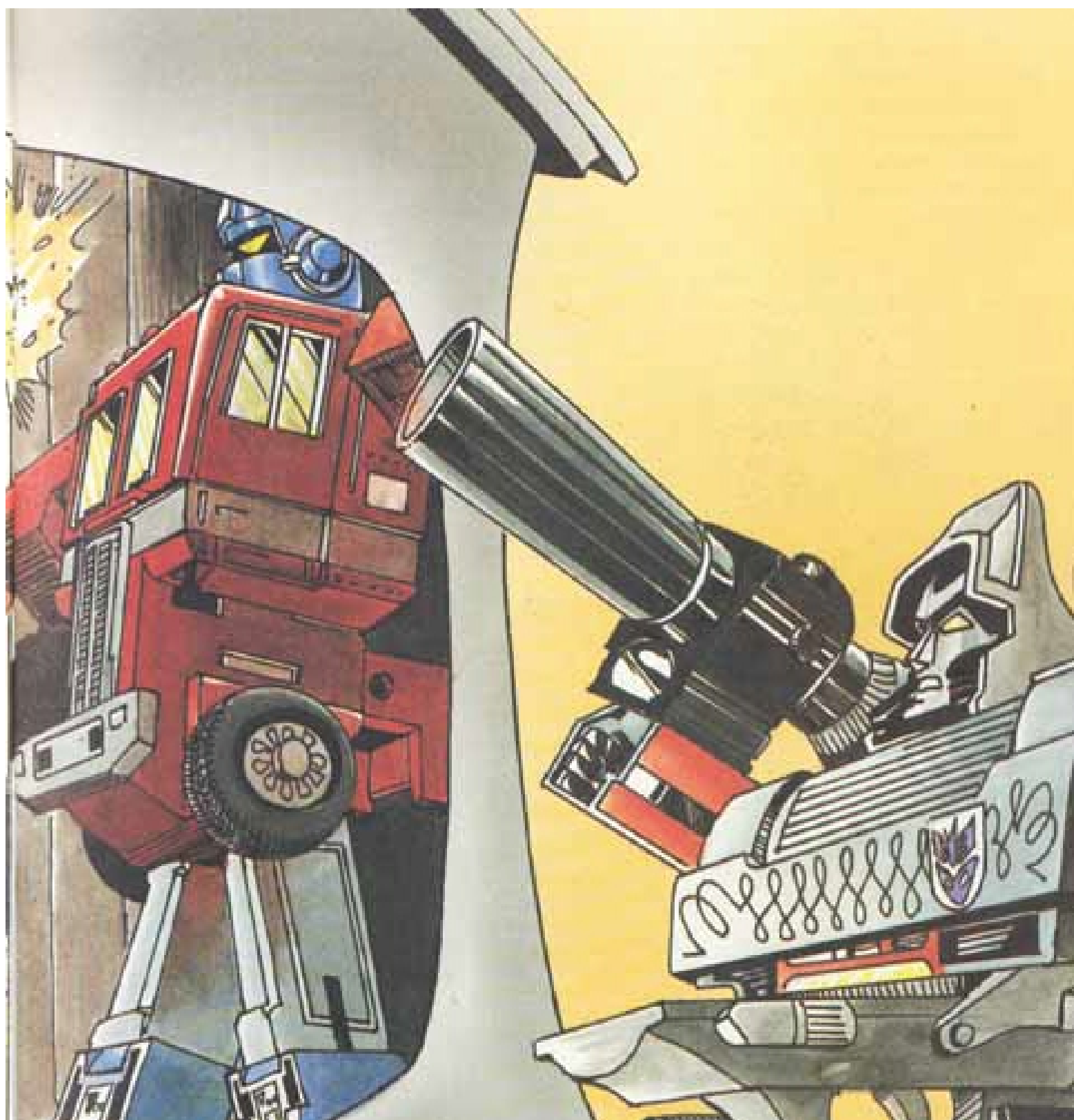
"That should keep him busy for a while, master," Soundwave added, trying to imitate Megatron's evil grin. "Should we join in now, master, or wait until the Autobots have been weakened?"

"Not yet," Megatron said, turning to the controls. "There's plenty of time and opportunity to crush the great Optimus Prime. Right now, I want more oil...more and more. Once that fuel is mine, we will destroy the Autobots...totally! Ha! Ha! Ha!"

The huge turbine fans on the transporter began to turn, slowly at first, as the engines burst into life. They soon picked up speed, rotating faster and faster...until the oil transporter lifted and hovered over the jungle.







The noise of the transporter was tremendous as it plowed into the thick jungle and disappeared, becoming part of that very jungle through its camouflage.

On the command deck, Megatron ordered, "Drills! Drills now!"

Soundwave pressed the button activating the giant laser-borers. In moments, they were punching their way into the forest floor, seeking the reservoir of oil below the surface.

Meanwhile, back at the mining camp, Prowl told Optimus Prime urgently, "Chief, we can't hold our position here much longer. What should we do?"

"Don't worry, Prowl. I planned for an emergency like this. I realized we were going to search a jungle area, so I came prepared with back-up forces...and here they are now!" Optimus Prime pointed up to the sky.

"The Dinobots!" Prowl exclaimed with relief.



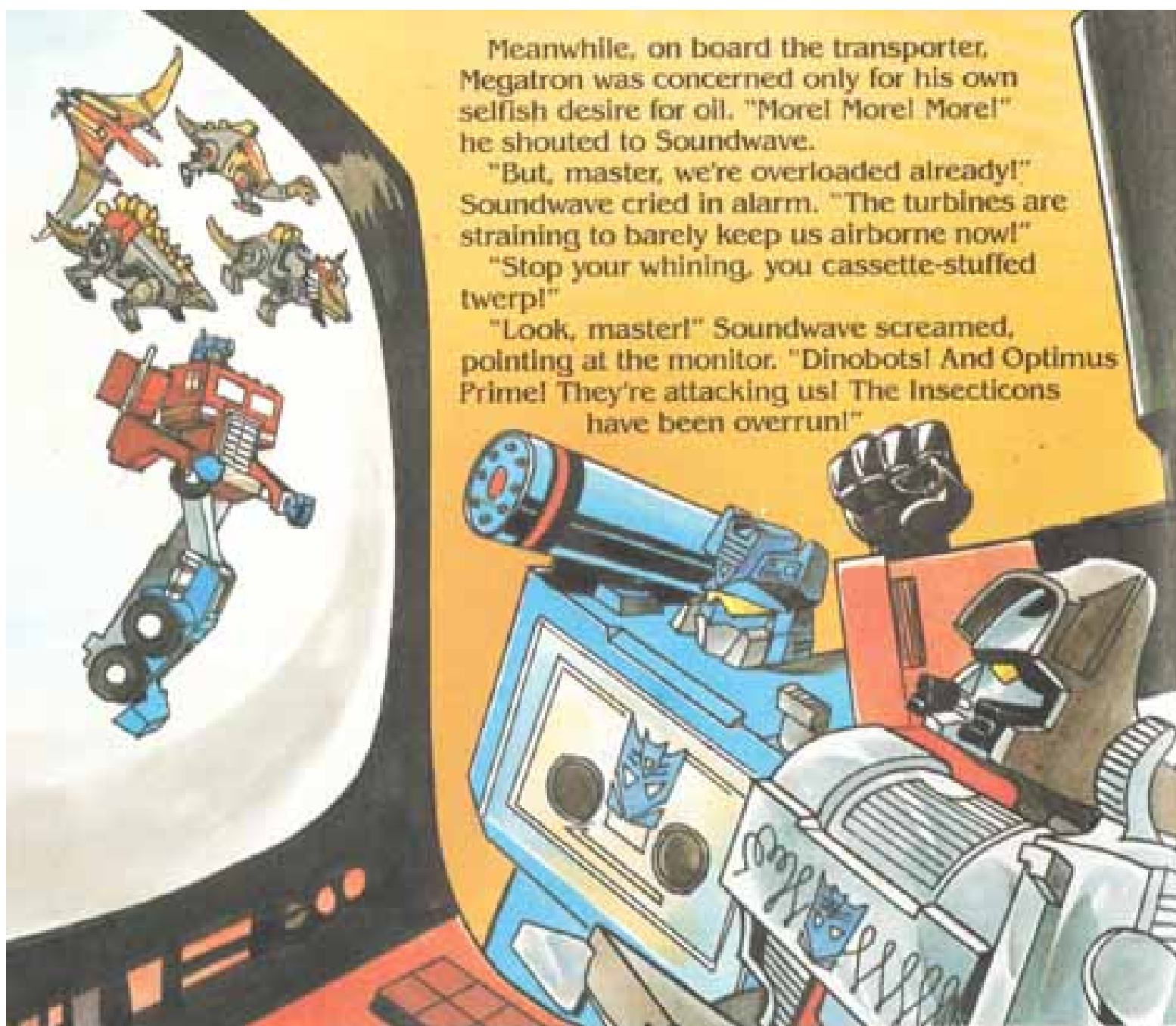




The Dinobots swept in low and slow, joining the battle and blasting the Insecticons with missiles and thermal bombs. Once they landed, the Dinobots tossed aside the Insecticons with flicks of their armored tails, then crushed them underfoot.

As the Insecticons were going down to defeat, Prowl noticed a heat sensor readout on his portable scanner. He called to Optimus Prime, "Look, chief! Only turbine fans would be producing such heat... turbine fans from an oil transporter."

Optimus Prime nodded. "That means Megatron is nearby. We'll take care of him first, then see about rescuing Bumblebee."



Meanwhile, on board the transporter, Megatron was concerned only for his own selfish desire for oil. "More! More! More!" he shouted to Soundwave.

"But, master, we're overloaded already!" Soundwave cried in alarm. "The turbines are straining to barely keep us airborne now!"

"Stop your whining, you cassette-stuffed twerp!"

"Look, master!" Soundwave screamed, pointing at the monitor. "Dinobots! And Optimus Prime! They're attacking us! The Insecticons have been overrun!"

At that moment, the transporter sank into the mud. The fans clogged, then stopped as the engines ground to a halt and exploded into flames.

"Hurry into the mole escape pod, master!" Soundwave cried urgently.

"I'll finish you yet, Optimus Prime! I'll return and finish you yet!" Megatron roared, as the mole escape pod disappeared beneath the surface into the oily ooze.

And the battle continues....

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